Tirana, Albania,
February 16, 1937.

No. 321

SUBJECT: The New Parliament Assembles; King Zog Makes A Speech.

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The Honorable

The Secretary of State,

Washington, D. C.

Sir:

I have the honor to refer to my despatch No. 310 of February 2, 1937, regarding the results of the quadrennial Parliamentary elections. I now have the honor to inform the Department that the new Parliament, comprising 58 Deputies, assembled on February 10, 1937, heard King Zog deliver an address and subsequently organized itself, electing, as predicted in the abovementioned despatch, Pandeli J. Evangheli President and re-electing Hikmet Delvina Vice President. Evanghli is no stranger in the high councils of state, having served as Prime Minister from 1930 to 1935.

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The Parliament is now awaiting the submission of the budget by the Minister of Finance.

The initial assembly of the new Parliament was colorful, the majority of the members of the Diplomatic Corps in full dress uniforms with decorations and the Princesses, the King's sisters, occupying boxes. However, His Majesty the King, a handsome man, especially when in full military uniform, provided most of the color. There was a wave of applause from the King's "chosen Parliament" when His Majesty, flanked by his military aides and by members of the Cabinet, entered the rear door of the tiny Parliamentary Hall, and with rapid military stride, advanced down the center aisle to the President's rostrum where, doffing his swanky-visored cap, he unrolled a manuscript and while every one remained standing, read his speech, terminating it with a few words spoken extemporaneously. Copy of the
1/ King's speech in English translation as well as copies
2/ of newspapers and newspaper clippings regarding the opening of the Parliament are enclosed herewith.

It may be of interest to observe that the principal streets of Tirana were cleared and roped off by a heavy military guard hours before the opening of Parliament at 10.30 a. m. The King's own Royal Guard formed a guard of honor at the entrance to the Parliamentary building.

Significant features of His Majesty's remarks were his reference to "reforms" and to "continuous and sincere cooperation with our Big Ally Italy" (see my telegram No. 3 of February 10, 1937, 1 p. m.) The proposed reform program remains vague and so far His Majesty has not chosen to elucidate, although it would appear that the

King

King is seeking sincerely to do something for his impoverished agriculturists who comprise 80 percent of the country's population. The Agrarian Bank, for which provision was made in the 1935 Accords with Italy, has been mentioned as a solution but it has not materialized and, I am reliably informed, there is some concern regarding its successful operation because of the limited funds available.

Another possible reform in His Majesty's mind is said to be an edict providing for the removal of veils from the faces of all Moslem women in Albania, numbering several hundred thousand. It may be pointed out that the King in his New Year's speech at the Palace declared that "we must make speedy and strong paces toward occidental culture and civilization" (see Legation's despatch No. 276 of January 5, 1937).

I might add in conclusion that the new Parliament appears to be composed of Albanian gentlemen of the old school, prosperous looking and contented with their own individual lots, in striking contrast to the impoverished men one sees in the streets and on the highways. If I am any judge of Parliamentary bodies, not many reforms will emerge voluntarily from the collaboration of these well nourished legislators. It should be remembered, however, that they are the henchmen of King Zog who, I believe, is sincerely desirous of doing something worthwhile for his people. Perhaps he can lead his Parliament, although I am very dubious.

Respectfully yours,

Hugh G. Grant.

Enclosures:
1/ Translation of King's speech.
2/ Copies of newspaper and clippings.
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Enclosure No. I to despatch No.
dated February 16, 1937, from the
American Legation, Tirana, Albania.

(Translation from Albanian)

KING ZOG'S MESSAGE TO THE NEW PARLIAMENT AT ITS OPENING SESSION WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 1937 AT 11 O'CLOCK A.M.

"Gentlemen:

"In inaugurating the Third Legislature we greet the Representatives of the Nation in the same hopes in which we inaugurated the two previous legislatures and with the happiness of having observed broadly that Our people have a soul adaptable for development and progress.

"It is true that the economic depression has extended its effects over Our country as well, but with the new measures which the Government, on Our instruction, will propose for the benefit of the improvement of farming, live stock and certain industries, causing national trade to increase thereby, we hope this difficult situation will soon be coped with.

"At the same time We apprise you that together with economic improvement We wish to secure to Our nation those social reforms which will elevate it to the grade of merited civilization and to guarantee to it a life in peace, tranquility and work.

"In Our foreign relations My Government will continue with its heretofore policy, always maintaining cordial and friendly relations with Our neighbors and with the other Nations; particularly with Our Big Ally, Italy, there shall be sincere and continuous cooperation.

"We desire, Gentlemen, that you devote your full activity to your duty and your support to the progress of the services of the State and particularly to the economic, social and cultural advancement of Our nation, should not be spared.

"We wish you full success in your lofty mission.

"Tirana, February 10, 1937."

The following is His Majesty's extemporaneous speech after the reading of his message to Parliament on February 10, 1937:

"Gentlemen:

"In Our Albania we have no parties and we have never had. So, the Supreme power, the Legislative

and

and the Executive powers, the Press, the Youth, males and females, peasants and city people, in other words the whole Nation should extend the hand to each other for the application of the administrative, economic, social and cultural reforms which according to Our orders are in preparation.

"This year there shall be made progress double that made during the past ten or eleven years.

"A nation which has resolved to live will work to that end and nothing can hinder its resolution.

"With this energy and with this faith in view I take courage to salute the dawn already of the progress of Our Country."

Enclosure No. 2 to despatch No. 321
dated February 16, 1937, from the
American Legation, Tirana, Albania.

(Translation from Albanian from the DRITA of Tirana
of February 11, 1937):

INAUGURATION OF THE THIRD LEGISLATURE.

The Third Legislature of the Kingdom was inaugurated by His Majesty King Zog I himself with the usual ceremonial yesterday.

His Majesty King Zog I entered the Parliament at 10:50 a.m., followed by his adjutants and by the members of the Government.

The Royal Princesses sat in the Royal Family Box. The diplomatic boxes excelled from the dress uniforms of the Ministers Plenipotentiary accredited to the Royal Court of Albania.

The members of the Parliament, all wearing full dress, were seated in their respective places. The other boxes and the balcony of the Chamber were filled with high Government officials, high military officers, journalists and men and women of the nobility of the country.

The entry of His Majesty the King was saluted with a burst of applause and unceasing cheers.

His Majesty, wearing the uniform of the Supreme Commander of the Army, with a smile greeted the Parliament and the audience and directed himself to the tribune of the Chamber.

In deep silence His Majesty read the Message from the Throne which follows:

(See enclosure No. 1).

While the entire audience continued to frantically applaud the Message His Majesty King Zog I addressed himself to the Albanian public as well as to the members of the Parliament with the following extemporaneous speech:

(see enclosure No. 1).

The Royal orders were covered with a burst of cheers.

Then His Majesty the King, followed by Their Highnesses the Princesses, left the Chamber of Deputies.

Enclosure No. III to despatch No. 321
dated February 16, 1937, from the
American Legation, Tirana, Albania.

(Translation from Albanian of editorial in the DRITA of Tirana of February 11, 1937):

THE KING'S ADDRESS.

Received with a burst of applause and with cheers that seemed unending our dear Sovereign, H. M. King Zog I, passed through His People, entered the Parliament yesterday, ascended the tribune and read the Message from the Throne.

The Royal words, emphasized by tones that gave full expression to their deep meaning, were listened to by the hundreds in the audience that had plenished the hall and the boxes with the attention that is given to the sacred words of the prophets. There stood facing the King the members of the High Royal Family, the members of the Cabinet, the members of the Parliament, the Diplomatic Corps, the State's high dignitaries, the National Press and a considerable number of the People. Nevertheless the burst of the applause ceased in one moment as by magic power and in the hall there was heard nothing but the echo of the royal words and the beating of the hearts of the audience.

The King spoke.

Our Sovereign and Leader read the Message. This time the Message was distinct from previous occasions. The Message this time was brief but it involved deep and broad lines of policy for the morrow. It embraced, synthetically, all our needs, our aspirations and our ideals.

The Message was brief but complete. After greeting the representatives of the nation His Majesty the King expressed his happiness in observing that "the Albanian people have a soul adaptable to development and progress."

The Sovereign has decided to see the early and fine realization of this development and progress and for that reason he has invited all the powers of the nation to cooperation.

The King knows our needs. His Majesty knows that the economic depression, this universal wound, has extended its effects over our country as well but he assures us that "with the new measures which the Government, on Our instruction, will propose for the benefit of the improvement of farming, live stock and certain industries, causing national trade to increase thereby, we hope that this difficult situation will soon be coped with."

Albania is entering into a period of economic organization. Albania is endowed by nature with abundant wealth which is sufficient to secure a happy living to the people and requisite advancement to the country. The Sovereign's principal observation is our economic organization, the strengthening of our productive forces --farming, live stock and small industries -- and the valuation of our work and our wealth.

The measures that are being prepared in accordance with the orders of the King and which will be presented to the Third Lesgilsature in its first session will aim at this principal objective.

But the King wills and orders that "together with the economic improvement we wish to secure to Our nation those social reforms which will elevate it to the grade of merited civilization and to guarantee to it a life in peace, tranquility and work."

The great New Year's present that His Majesty the King sent to His people on New Year's Day for a long chain of reforms is entering its preiod of realizations The Royal promise was repeated yesterday and it was the core of the Message from the Throne.

"In the foreign relations the Government will continue with its heretofore policy: Cordial and friendly relations with the neighbors and with the other Nations, and sincere and continuous cooperation with the Big Ally, Italy."

His Majesty the King concluded the Message wishing full success to the members of the Parliament in the fulfilment of their mission.

The reading of the Message was finished but the Sovereign, addressing not the Parliament alone but also the entire Albanian people, added in words that mirror His full conviction and decision:

(See extemporaneous speech in enclosre No. 1).

The Albanian people send a collective answer, an answer that comes from one million hearts, to the clear and meaningful words of His Majesty the King upon Whom all the hopes of the Nation rest:

"We stand ready for duty, always rallying around Your Majesty! "

Central File: Decimal File 875.00, Internal Affairs Of States, Albania, Political Affairs., February 16, 1937. 16 Feb. 1937. MS Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States: Records of the U.S. Department of State, 1930-1944: Records of the Department of State Relating to Political Relations of Turkey, Greece, and the Balkan States, 1930-1939. National Archives (United States). Archives Unbound, link.gale.com%2Fapps%2Fdoc%2FSC5111390954%2FGDSC%3Fu%3Domni%26sid%3Dbookmark-GDSC. Accessed 20 June 2025.